

The Musket Report



Newsletter of the Wiregrass Chapter ALSSAR

Enterprise, Alabama
Home of the Boll Weevil Monument
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January Meeting

We trust everyone had a happy holiday season by enjoying quality time with their families and are looking forward to another great year. The January meeting of the Wiregrass Chapter will be held at 11:30 a.m., Thursday, 21 January, 2010 at the Enterprise Country Club. There will be no speaker but instead President Kelsoe wishes to hold a general business meeting to organize our plans for the upcoming year and establish dates. Please bring your ideas for the continuation of moving this chapter forward..The cost is \$10 per person. Please let President Kelsoe know no later than 18 January if you will attend.

Chartering Banquet

On 10 December the chapter held its annual chartering banquet at the Enterprise Country Club with 25 members and guests in attendance and enjoyed the fellowship, especially the drawings for the door prizes. Special thanks to Sam Kyser for the donation of the Auburn and Alabama birdhouses.

Retiring President Jack Oden presented Certificates of Appreciation to the 2009 Officers and a special certificate to Malon Murphy for perfect attendance. The chapter also presented John Wallace with a special gift of appreciation for his outstanding service for the past 10 years.



President Jack Oden presents special gift to long-time newsletter editor and chapter registrar for 10 years of exception service to the Wiregrass Chapter

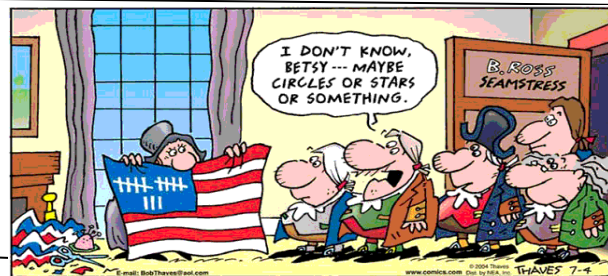
New Officers Take Oath of Office (L to R) President John Kelsoe, Historian Charles dye, Vice President Marvin Vickers; Trasurer, John Ray Fuller., Secretary Jim Gilmer, and Charplain, Rex Everage.



Eagle Scout Recognition. A certificate of recognition was presented to Zachery Starling of Enterprise on his achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

Dues Collection: The chapter has reported to the state secretary a beginning 2010 membership of 46 adult and 5 junior members for a total of 51 members. The chapter lost 4 members because of the non-payment of dues and one member (Walt Reeder) who transferred to the Florida Society. At the same time supplemental applications for Franz Killedrew (patriot Jonathan Nichols) and Dr. Ken Chancey (patriot Jess Warren) have been approved by the National Society. Congratulations to these gentlemen for taking the time to track down another Revolutionary War ancestor. It is incumbent upon each of us to encourage friends and relatives we think may be qualified and interested to apply for membership in the chapter. Let us make it a goal to get at least 5 new members this year.

Chapter Website updated. President Kelsoe has produced "A Catalog of Revolutionary Soldiers buried in the Wiregrass Region of Southeast Alabama" and has posted this on the chapter website. Look under "Patriot Graves" for this listing of patriots buried in this area. It lists the name of the Patriot, the county in which he is buried, and in many instances the location of the burial site. Check out this listing of 30 Patriots buried in the Wiregrass region.



Everyone is looking forward to the **ALSSAR State Convention** which will be held February 26-27 in Birmingham, Alabama. A registration form was in the last issue of the ALSSAR newsletter but also can be downloaded from the ALSSAR web site wee.alsar.org. Information about the hotel and other events are also listed on the web site.

Hope to see you there.



Birth of the Continental Navy

A continual conundrum for the Colonists during the Revolution were the twin concerns of interdicting British military supplies, while simultaneously preventing interdiction of their own. To the end, the Continental Congress approved on 13 October, 1775 the refit and armament of 14 gun brigs, the *Andrew Doria* and the *Cabot*. These vessels were then dispatched to intercept British shipping enroute to Canada.

The original intent was to intercept the supply of arms and provisions to British soldiers, who had placed Boston under martial law. George Washington had already informed Congress that he had assumed command of several ships for this purpose, and individual governments of various colonies had outfitted their own warships. The first formal move-

ment for a navy came from Rhode Island, whose State Assembly had passed on 26 August, 1775, a resolution instructing the delegates to Congress to introduce legislation calling "for building at the Continental expense a fleet of sufficient force, for the protection of these colonies, and for employing them in such a manner and place as will most effectively annoy our enemies . . . the measure of the Continental Congress was met with much derision, especially on the part of Maryland delegates Samuel Chase who exclaimed it to be "the maddest idea in the world.:" John Adams later recalled "The opposition . . . was very loud and vehement. It was . . . represented as the most wild, visionary, mad project that had ever been imagined. It was an infant taking a mad bull by his horns."

But during this time the issue arose of Quebec-bound British supply ships carrying desperately needed provisions that could otherwise benefit the Continental Army. The Continental Congress appointed John Adams, Silas Deane, and John Langston to draft a plan to seize ships from the convoy in question.

On 13 October 1775 Congress authorized the building of the first vessels of the Continental Navy, literally the birth of the U.S. Navy as it is considered officially.

There were one major success. This was the campaign against British shipping waged by a flotilla of schooners outfitted and organized by George Washington. Never numbering more than eight vessels, Washington's rag-tag squadron seized 55 prizes in and around Massachusetts Bay during the first two years of the war. The king of war carried on by Washington's schooners—mostly attacks on unarmed enemy storeships that hauled loads of foodstuffs and the like—simply resulted in few dramatics. Topping the list of capture were two heavily laden ordnance ships whose cargoes proved an absolute windfall for the munitions-starved Continental Army.

By the end of October, Congress authorized the purchases and outfitting of four armed vessels. Soon a Naval Committee was formed which quickly purchased merchantmen and oversaw their proper outfitting and readying for combat. Regulations were drafted by John Adams and adopted 28 November 1775. When it came to selecting commanders for ships, Congress tended to be split evenly between merit and patronage. Among those who were selected for political reasons were Esek Hopkins, Dudley Saltonstall, and John Burroughs Hopkins. However, Abraham Whipple, Nicholas Biddle, and John Paul Jones managed to be appointed with backgrounds in marine warfare.

On 3 December, 1775 the *Alfred*, *Andrew Doria*, *Cabot*, and *Columbus* were commissioned. On 22 December, 1775, Esek Hopkins was appointed the naval commander-in-chief and offices of the navy were commissioned. With his small fleet, complemented by the *Providence*, *Wasp*, and *Hornet*, led the first major naval action of the Continental Navy. In early March, 1776, against Nassau, Bahamas, where stores of much-needed gunpowder were seized for the use of the Continental Army. However success was diluted with the appearance of disease spreading from ship to ship.

On 6 April, 1776 the squadron, with the addition of the *Fly* unsuccessfully encountered the 20 gun HMS *Glasgow* in the first major sea battle of the Continental Navy. Hopkins failed to give any substantive orders other than the order to recall the fleet from the engagement, a move that Captain Nicholas Biddle described as "away we all went helter-skelter one flying there, another there."



Left: Esek Hopkins

Right: John Paul Jones

